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ABSTRACT

The School for All Ages project was designed to increase contacts between members of different age groups so that the learning of basic life skills and standard academic content can be promoted through mutual teaching and learning; and to create a cooperative atmosphere in which students function better in groups, help others in the learning situation, and operate dependently, independently or competitively where appropriate. The intended mode of operation was fully implemented. Student grouping provided a variety of cross-age learning experiences. Teachers implemented curricula and techniques to promote cross-age interactions and cooperation. Adult students became part of the regular program and the first group of Life Career Change classroom aides completed their project experiences. The project was successful in: (1) creating individualized curricular plans for adult students; (2) encouraging teacher assistants to pursue career changes; (3) encouraging community involvement; (4) developing an understanding of cross-age learning; (5) providing balanced classroom organization with respect to cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning; and (6) providing a variety of experiences in which students interact with adults and students of different ages and sex. The project was partially successful in improving standardized reading achievement scores, but was not successful in increasing reading achievement levels or secondary level students. (Author/JAC)

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THE SCHOOL FOR ALL AGES

SECOND YEAR REPORT

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THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

January, 1977

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THE SCHOOL FOR ALL AGES (SFAA)

The School for All Ages (SFAA) is an educational program which promotes the integration of pupils of different ages in an educational setting and promotes more appropriate uses of cooperative, competitive, individualistic, and dependent learning modes.

RATIONALE

The project resulted from two basic beliefs. The first belief is that American society segregates people of different ages in unnatural and unhealthy ways and that learning both standard academic content and general life skills can be enhanced by bringing those of different ages together where mutual teaching and learning can occur. The second belief is that many students suffer academically because of pressures imposed by an overly competitive school atmosphere and that students will function better as individuals and as members of groups if they learn the skills for all four learning modes and understand the appropriate uses of each. These four include the cooperative, competitive, individualistic, and dependent modes.

These beliefs were supported by (1) interviews with one-room school teachers, (2) investigations of the experiences of other schools using various models of cross-age educational experiences, (3) an extensive search of the literature regarding intergenerational exchanges and cooperation-competition

issues, and (4) conferences with educators, parents, and students.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is expected that the project will provide an educational setting in both the school and community in which people of all ages have opportunities to interact and learn from each other in a cooperative fashion. It is expected that two separate school facilities will provide programs which allow students to spend their entire school career in one school setting. Students are expected to interact in a variety of age groupings as opposed to interacting exclusively with their own age peers. Students are expected to interact in a variety of ways with adults other than their specific classroom teachers. It is expected that classroom interactions will stress cooperation rather than competition between individuals. Students are expected to study how groups operate and the role individuals play in the group process. It is expected that community projects will be actively worked on by members of the school population. It is expected than an adult student program will integrate the adults' experiences with those of the school age children. It is expected that a Life Career Program for eight adults from the local community will be implemented. It is also expected that the acquisition of basic skills will be improved through tutoring, age-integrated classrooms, and interdependence.

MODE OF OPERATION

The Schools for All Ages operate in a church site and a former parochial school in Districts 3 and 7 respectively. The school-age population includes approximately 160 students in Grades k-11 at each site. All of the students are from the local neighborhood and attend each school by choice. A program has been developed which encourages adults from the community to join regular school activities in order to acquire their high school diploma or to improve selected skills. Each site provides a Life Career Change Program for four adults from the local community. These adults receive a stipend for attending a local university for coursework in child-care and for providing paraprofessional service in the schools.

Each school has a coordinator, a faculty of eight or nine full-time teachers, and one and one-half specialist teachers. In addition, the two sites share an adult resource leader. Moreover, all project staff receive scheduled staff development training throughout the school year.

The schools group students in order to provide a variety of cross-age experiences. These basic groupings include: (a) family groups (a group of 25 students from kindergarten through adults which meets 45 minutes daily), (b) peer groups (a group of about 25 students within a two to three year age span including some adults according to skill level which meets about 3½ hours daily), (c) interest group (a group consisting of students of all ages who have selected a specific activity such

as cooking, the school newspaper, sports or crafts for a six week experience).

Teachers introduce a variety of curricula and techniques to promote cross-age experiences and cooperative learning. These curricula include Man, A Course of Study (MACOS), Moffett Interaction Language Series, CDA Mathematics, and the Affective Education Program's Together Book. Techniques include sharing pages, group projects, inter-group competition, magic circles, school-wide events, tutoring, and cross-age learning centers.

In addition, students and teachers engage in activities which are designed to promote closer relationships with the school community including block clean-up projects, street fairs, bake sales, and field trips.

PREVIOUS FINDINGS

The Logan school opened on February 3, 1975 as scheduled. The opening of the Northern Liberties school was delayed until March 5, 1975 because of the late signing of the building lease. The teachers were selected and trained, students were recruited on a voluntary basis, and adult students became part of the regular program. The Life Career Change aides provided service to the school and pursued their coursework at a local university.

Students were grouped during the school day to maximize cross-age experiences. Teachers implemented curricula and teaching techniques to encourage cross-age relationships.

Moreover, teachers and students engaged in appropriate activities to reach-out to the local communities.

Generally, the project accomplished a great deal in a relatively brief four months of operation.

THE 1975-1976 EVALUATION

The current year's evaluation of the School For All Ages (SFAA) project focused on all aspects of its operation including academic performance, attendance, community related activities, adult student endeavors, specific attitudes, and program implementation. The previous year's evaluation concentrated primarily on the project's enabling objectives.

Standardized achievement tests, informal reading inventories, official school records, interivews, questionnaires, and observational checklists provided the relevant data. It should be emphasized that some of the project's stated objectives intentionally did not include specific measurable criteria of success. In these cases the data collected and analyzed will provide hypotheses concerning the project's future operation as well as critical information for program changes.

IMPLEMENTATION

The project's intended mode of operation was considered fully implemented.

Fourteen full days (approximately 70 hours) of observation at both schools were recorded on a formal observational checklist. Numerous anecdotal notes were also recorded. The regularly scheduled staff development sessions were attended on

two separate occasions during the year. All of these activities provided a wealth of data describing the project's implementation.

This was the first complete year for the operation of the project's schools. A total of 155 students attended the Logan school in District 7 and 160 students attended the Northern Liberties school in District 3. The Logan school was approximately 10 students below enrollment quota and Northern Liberties about 20 below quota.

The adult student program throughout the year lost a number of adults in regular attendance. Of the 15 adults on roll at Logan as of October 31, 1976 approximately five continued to maintain regular attendance. At Northern Liberties approximately 15 of the 24 adults on roll as of October 31 continued to attend on a regular basis. Four additional adults officially enrolled as of January, 1976.

During only 33% of the formal classroom observations were the adult students in attendance. However, it should be noted that in many observed classrooms the adult students were not scheduled for attendance. At those times when they were present in the classroom, they were observed working alone or working with a younger student.

The eight teacher assistants in the project's Life Career Change Program served as classroom aides three and one-half days per week. Findings from the formal observations revealed that there were no assistants present in the classroom being observed during 71% of observed time. These absences were attributed to the assistants' required attendance at their university courses

or to their schedules of work at their respective schools where, at times, they provided service to more than one teacher. When they were present in the rooms being observed, the majority of their time was devoted to working with individual students. They were also observed completing paper work, supervising small groups, playing learning games, preparing materials, or remaining available for assistance.

Full-time science and mathematics teachers were added to the staff of the Northern Liberties school at the beginning of the school year. A new social studies teacher and a new elementary teacher filled available vacancies at Northern Liberties. At Logan one new elementary teacher filled an available vacancy. More recently, art, music, and physical education teachers were hired on a part-time basis for both schools.

During the summer of 1975, the teachers from both schools received approximately 60 hours of staff development dealing with a variety of relevant and critical topics including a review of the previous year, the adult program, scheduling and grouping problems, goal setting for the coming year, curricula, interdependence, affective techniques, and boundary setting. This staff development effort has continued during the school year with sessions totaling three hours each month involving the teachers at both schools. Approximately 30 hours of staff development occurred dealing with the following topics: tutoring, classroom aides, cooperation versus competition, the California Achievement Tests (how to take a test), labeling,

the adult program, family group activities, and the various learning modes.

Cross-age interactions were encouraged by the organization of the students into groups for many planned daily activities and by the variety of curricula and techniques introduced by the project teachers. The success of the cross-age interactions seemed to be dependent upon the nature of the planned activity. For example the planned tutoring program seemed very successful in encouraging cross-age interaction. Many games and craft activities were also successful. Breakfast, lunch, and interest groups provided additional opportunities for cross-age interactions. Intergroup competitions were reported at both schools as successful endeavors promoting cross-age experiences. The teachers seemed to be willing to try new and different formats.

Numerous community related activities occurred. Articles appeared in local newspapers which indicated the schools' efforts to inform the communities about their programs. Reports from the schools' coordinators indicated that some students were placed in local businesses or service organizations for on-the-job experiences.

The physical plant of each school received attention. New lighting greatly improved the overall appearance of many rooms. Moreover, some rooms received fresh paint and carpets. The Logan school, however, continued to require additional renovation for lighting, accoustics, and general appearance.

The curricula in each school expanded to include additional reading materials, the installation at Logan of the Computer Managed Instruction (CMI) program and computer terminal, additional science materials for secondary school students, the complete implementation of the CDA mathematics program, and the receipt of additional Title I services including classroom reading aides.

Two events which require special mention included the school-wide birthday party for the first complete year of the school's operation and the graduation of six adult students. One adult graduate returned to the School and is participating in the Life Career Change program as a classroom aide.

ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: SFAA pupils will increase their reading achievement levels during the 1975-1976 school year to the extent that 80% of the pupils gain at least one book level and 50% gain at least two book levels between September/October pretest and May posttest on a group Informal Reading Inventory.

This objective was not attained.

The group Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) was administered as a pretest to all pupils in Grades 1-11 between September and November. The late administration to many pupils was attributed to a delay in receiving the appropriate testing materials from the districts' reading departments. The IRI's were administered and scored by the language arts teachers in each building. The results were intended to be used to prescribe appropriate programs for the correction of individual deficiencies.

At Logan, 106 pupils completed both the pretest and the posttest. No pretest data were submitted for pupils in grades 5 and 6. Of the 106 pupils, 63 (59%) gained at least one book level and 27 (23%) gained at least two book levels.

Data from Northern Liberties was not submitted for analysis and inclusion in this report.

Objective 2: SFAA will evidence higher reading achievement than SFAA feeder schools as indicated by higher mean-school subtest scores on the California Achievement Tests (CAT-70). The resulting scores will rank SFAA higher than its feeder schools on final district rankings.

This objective was partially attained. Grades 1, 2, 7, and 9 at Logan and grades 8 and 9 at Northern Liberties all attained higher mean scores on the Total Reading subtest than the same grades in the feeder schools. Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 at Logan and grades 1-6 at Northern Liberties did not. Grade 8 at Logan and grade 7 at Northern Liberties achieved the same mean score as the same grade in the feeder schools.

The California Achievement Tests (CAT-70) are administered to all students in the School District in February as part of the city-wide testing program. The tests are scored by machine and the results forwarded to each school in the late Spring. The Total Reading subtest mean score of each grade at both SFAA sites was then compared to the mean score for the same grades at the respective feeder schools.

The national percentile ranks corresponding to the mean

scores for each grade on the Total Reading subtest of CAT-70 are displayed in Table 1.

It should be emphasized that although the majority of SFAA classrooms did not attain higher mean scores than respective comparison classrooms from these feeder schools, an analysis of individual scores indicated an improvement in scores from 1974-1975 to 1975-1976 for a significant proportion of SFAA students. The analysis also revealed that the SFAA student population at the time of the school's openings had a greater proportion of students below the national sixteenth percentile than did the student population at their feeder schools. Consequently, for SFAA students to score higher than feeder school students would require significant academic growth during the school year.

Objective 3: All new secondary SFAA pupils will exhibit more positive attitudes toward school as evidenced by a significant ($p<.05$) increase in their attendance between their current year's attendance at SFAA and their previous year's attendance at their former school as determined by official school attendance records.

This objective was not attained.

The official school attendance records for all new secondary level students were collected for the 1974-1975 and 1975-1976 school years. The mean number of days absent for each year was computed and compared using a correlated *t*-test of significance.

TABLE 1

NATIONAL PERCENTILE RANKS ON 1976 CAT-70 TOTAL READING SUBTEST

Grade	Schools				
	Northern Liberties	Feeder Schools A	B	Logan	Feeder Schools C
1	33	59	78	54	31
2	26	39	65	60	42
3	16	33	45	9	21
4	10	25	27	26	34
5	9	21	30	18	24
6	10	36	20	22	26
7	16	16	16	29	20
8	20	15	13	15	15
9	22	9	14	29	16

At Northern Liberties, 24 new secondary level students with available attendance records were absent for 32.2 days in 1974-75 and 31.8 days in 1975-76. At Logan the corresponding figure for 28 students were 54.3 days in 1974-75 and 45.3 days in 1975-76. The differences were not statistically significant even though the average student at Logan attended school for nearly two more weeks in 1975-76 than they did in 1974-75.

Objective 4: Fifty percent of the adult students who enrolled and are attending the SFAA on October 3, 1975 (the final adult enrollment) will complete their school year and will maintain a record of 65% attendance as determined by official school attendance records.

Attainment of this objective could not be determined because attendance records of adult students requested by the evaluation team were not submitted by the Adult Coordinator. However, informal reports of adult attendance during the year indicated that attainment of the objective was not likely. It should be noted that because of the difficulties in maintaining adult attendance records several steps have been taken to create a viable attendance procedure for the next school year.

Objective 5: An individualized curricular plan will be created for each adult student which includes an assessment of incoming skills, a statement of long range goals to be accomplished, and a program of studies designed to attain these goals. These plans will be available for review in the students' record files.

This objective was attained.

Each adult student's personal record folder contained evidence of an assessment of incoming skills, a statement of long range goals, and a program of studies.

Objective 6: Seventy-five percent (75%) of the teacher assistants completing their SFAA training experience in December will either continue their present education leading to a career change or will obtain a job which is different from the jobs held previous to their SFAA experiences.

This objective was attained.

The first set of eight teacher assistants completed their SFAA experiences in December. Their program, entitled a Life Career Change Program, consisted of (1) three semesters of attendance at a local university for coursework in child care and (2) practicum service to the two schools in the role of classroom aide.

All eight of these adults are currently continuing their program of studies leading to child-care certification, working full-time in a human service profession, or attending college full-time. Eight new adults began the same program in January.

Objective 7: Meetings, workshops or other activities designed to encourage community knowledge of and participation in school activities will be conducted during the current school year and recorded on the SFAA Activity Form. The extent of the effort by each respective school will be judged by SFAA leadership personnel.

This objective was attained. The extent of this effort by each school was judged satisfactory by SFAA leadership personnel.

A summary of each community-related activity was completed on the SFAA Activity Form by the participating teacher. The form included the objectives of the activity, the date and time of the activity, the number of participants, and some evaluation of the activity. These forms were kept on file in the office of each school and are now available in the Office of Research and Evaluation.

A summary of these activity forms revealed the following:

(a) 37 activities were reported at Logan and 29 at Northern Liberties. (Northern Liberties did not submit forms for May and June);

(b) the activities occured with regularity throughout the school year;

(c) the frequency of activities within and outside the local school community were about the same in number.

Objective 8: SFAA pupils in Grades 5 and above will develop and be able to specify in formal interviews a personal viewpoint about cross-age learning during the 1975-1976 school year based on a variety of group experiences provided as a part of the regular curriculum.

This objective was attained.

In June, randomly selected students in grades 5-11 were interviewed at both SFAA sites. The SFAA Cross-Age Interview focused on the students' perceptions, opinions and experiences

in cross-age classes and tutoring situations, and on general comparison to their previous school experiences. The students were interviewed individually by a member of the evaluation team in a quiet, comfortable location. They were encouraged to be candid in their responses, which were recorded as precisely as possible.

Students readily elaborated upon their opinions with specific examples from their experience. When analyzed, the summary of the interview information verified the existence of generally positive feelings of students toward the unique features of SFAA and more specifically toward their cross-age experiences. Of the students interviewed, 95% recognized the uniqueness of SFAA and generally felt positive about the alternative aspects of the program. They did react negatively, however, to the lack of facilities, cleanliness of the buildings, and the few students who "took advantage" of the freedoms offered. When asked to comment on cross-age classroom experiences, students specifically liked the opportunities to help others when they were able to solicit help when they needed it, and to assume their assigned tutoring responsibilities. They did not appreciate younger students making excessive noise or not listening in classes. Some older students felt the program was geared too closely to the young students' needs. Conversely, some younger students felt that olders did not really help and were sometimes "bossy."

Interactions between school-age students and adults were primarily related to school work. Very few students related

to adults on a personal level. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the students responded positively to having adults in the same school, but their responses were about evenly divided when asked if they would be comfortable with more adults in the school next year. The most common objection to adults was their reported tendency toward a privileged attitude. Finally, most students seemed to be aware of the purpose of family groups as a time for students of all ages to be together, to become acquainted, and to help each other.

Objective 9: SFAA classrooms will provide a balanced organization relevant to cooperative, competitve, and individualistic learning as measured by the SFAA Observational Checklist.

This objective was considered to be highly formative Consequently, [illegible] purposes of this evaluation to describe fully the classroom learning environment in the schools in order to understand which strategies were most conducive to actual implementation. Therefore, no statement of attainment will be made.

The SFAA Observational Checklist was designed to provide a complete description of a SFAA classroom. More specifically, the checklist was designed to provide information concerning the proportion of time devoted to cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning modes. The major categories of the checklist included the following: (1) classroom organization, (2) student-student interaction, and (3) teacher-student interaction. Additional categories included (1) adult students,

(2) teachers assistants, (3) cross-age interaction, and (4) the teacher. Each of these categories was subdivided into three to eight descriptive subcategories. The entire checklist was completed during a five-minute period of observation. At least six to eight of these five minute intervals comprised a single observational sitting. The data were summarized across categories depending on the nature of the specific sub-categories and their relevance to cooperative, competitive, or individualistic learning modes.

The proportions of time devoted to cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning activities indicated that the competitive mode was seldom observed. Those phenomena which may have contributed to competition in the classroom included extensive drill work, tests or other evaluations, student arrangement, encouragement from the teacher to complete tasks better than other class members, praise or criticism from the teacher which may create superior or inferior feelings, and consistent clarification of rules by the teachers. Only 3% of observed time were devoted to these phenomena.

The proportions of time devoted to the individualistic and cooperative modes were very similar. Forty-seven percent (47%) of observed time was devoted to individualistic learning activities. These included skill-building activities, arrangements which isolated pupils from each other, teacher-stated limits which did not permit student access to each other, self-contained sets of materials for each pupil, almost no interaction between pupils,

pupils working alone to accomplish tasks, pupils seeking assistance only from the teacher, and teachers expressed support for working alone and ignoring others.

Forty-two percent (42%) of the time was devoted to cooperative learning. Observed phenomena included group problem-solving activities, clustered arrangements of students which fostered sharing of ideas, sharing of materials and books, much interaction between students, a pooling and division of labor in accomplishing tasks, a general group orientation, students seeking help and assistance from each other, group products, and expressed support from the teacher for sharing, helping, and combining work.

The project strongly believes that the competitive atmosphere in most public school classrooms is detrimental to efficient learning. The data suggesting that competition in the SFAA classrooms was almost nonexistent, provides support for the success of the staff development efforts which have stressed the negative outcomes of individual competition in learning activities.

Objective 10: SFAA staff will provide a variety of experiences for students interacting with adults in the classroom with other students of different ages and sex, and siblings in the school.

This objective was considered attained. No specific measurable criteria were included in the statement of the objective. The project staff were interested in a complete description of the cross-age experiences provided by all SFAA teachers in order to determine future staff development needs.

Organizationally, the schools grouped students in order to provide a variety of cross-age experiences. The three major groups included (1) family group, (2) peer-group, and (3) interest group. Family groups met for approximately 45 minutes daily and included about 25 students from kindergarten through adults. Peer groups met for approximately three and one half hours daily and included about 25 students. These students generally fall within a 2-3 year grade level range (e.g., k, 1, and 2 or 7 and 8). The adult students were placed in these groups according to the level of their skill development.

Teachers introduced a variety of curricula and techniques to promote cross-age learning. The curricula included MACOS, the Moffett-Interaction Language Series, CDA Math, and the AEP Together Book. Techniques include magic circles, tutoring, sharing pages, school-wide events, group projects, and learning centers.

Because of the limited number of adult students enrolled and attending the schools, opportunities for cross-age interactions between SFAA regular students and SFAA adult students were minimal.

When adult students were present in rooms being observed most of their time was devoted to individual activities. However, informal interviews conducted by AEP personnel with students and adults seemed to indicate that those limited exchanges which did occur were significant. Students mentioned the adults (1) helped to maintain a "serious tone" in the classrooms, (2) shared their ideas and thoughts, and (3) stressed the urgency of completing high school. The adults indicated that younger students helped them with their studies and that they felt positively about helping younger students. They also mentioned that their SFAA experiences helped them improve their relationship with their own children.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The School for All Ages project was designed to deal with two basic concerns in our society: (1) the segregation of children by age in the educational setting, and (2) a school atmosphere which tends to be overly competitive. Therefore, the project has two major goals: (1) to increase contacts between members of different age groups and generations in order that the learning of basic life skills and standard academic content can be promoted through mutual teaching and learning, and (2) to create a cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere in which students learn how to function better in groups, to help others in the learning situation, and to operate dependently, independently or competitively where appropriate.

The project's intended mode of operation was fully implemented. Students were grouped during the school day to provide a variety of cross-age learning experiences. Teachers implemented curricula and techniques designed to promote cross-age interactions and a more cooperative learning atmosphere. Adult students became part of the regular program and the first group of Life Career Change classroom aides completed their project experiences and were replaced by a second group. Moreover, the schools made concerted efforts to relate to their communities.

The project was successful in regard to the following: (1) creating individualized curricular plans for its adult students, (2) encouraging the teacher assistants to pursue a

career change, (3) conducting meetings and activities to encourage community involvement with the schools, (d) developing in each child an understanding of cross-age learning, (5) providing a balanced classroom organization with respect to cooperative, competitive, and individualistic learning, and (6) providing a variety of experiences for students to interact with adults and with other students of different ages and sex. The project was partially successful in improving the standardized reading achievement scores of its participating pupils. The project was not successful in increasing the reading achievement levels of its pupils or in significantly improving the attendance of its secondary level students. The objective related to the attendance of adult students could not be determined because the data were never submitted.